

At the present time the custom of *terersthi* has a far wider range. It is obvious that when a widower takes the wife of another he is simply transferring his difficulty, and the man whose wife he has taken will have to seek a new partner. It often happens that a man takes the wife of a boy married, perhaps, to a girl of about the same age as himself, and when this boy reaches manhood he will have to seek a wife and will naturally try to obtain the wife of another rather than be content with a child perhaps only three or four years of age. It would be impossible that such a custom as that of *terersthi* should remain limited in scope, but there is no doubt that at the present day it has become the custom for any man who takes a fancy for the wife of another to endeavour to obtain her for himself, and I was told that he would give large bribes to the elders of the Todas to attain his object. It seems quite clear that, at the present time, it is not considered necessary to obtain the consent either of the wife or of the husband, and in some cases the wife has been taken from her husband by force.¹

In some recent cases the aggrieved parties in such disputes have appealed to the Government, and during my visit a petition was being drawn up for presentation to the Governor of Madras, asking that the abuses of the *terersthi* custom should be remedied.

DIVORCE

Divorce exists among the Todas quite apart from the transference of wives just considered.

I was told that a man divorces his wife for two reasons, and for two only, the first reason being that the wife is a fool and the second that she will not work. Barrenness is not generally regarded as a reason for divorce, though I was told of one case in which a man had sent away his wife on this account. It seemed more usual in such a case to take a second wife. In some cases the illness of the husband has been regarded as a ground for divorce. Intercourse between

¹ For an instance see p. 535.

115 him to delve into the intimate details of tribal customs. He was also a very intelligent individual who fully grasped the interest of anthropological research, and was keen to make use of the results in the hope of improving the material condition of the Todas. Without his assistance, it is doubtful whether I would have acquired so penetrating an insight into the Toda way of life, something for which I am extremely grateful to him.

[589] Kanvarsathi's father was a rather notorious character among the Todas called Kiunervan (Table 14 of Rivers' genealogical tables) who had no less than eleven wives, one after the other. Kanvarsathi was the only son of the eleventh wife, and was born in 1905 at the Toda village of Paletkwar (known as Attakoraimand in the language of the Badagas) near Or, on the left-hand side of the Ootacamund-Gudalur road. Two months after his birth, his mother died, and his half-sister, Sinkup, later wife of Ujar (48, Rivers' Ushadz, one of my best informants), a daughter of his father's second wife, took him away with her and very grudgingly looked after him.

Six years later, Kiunervan also died, leaving one boy, Kanvarsathi, and two elder girls. The total number of his father's offspring had not been very great, despite the eleven wives. There were, altogether, only three sons and two daughters, of which two boys died before Kanvarsathi was born, and the two girls after, leaving him the sole survivor. Strictly speaking he became the only heir to his father's estate, which [559] consisted, at the time of death, of sixty buffaloes and some gold ornaments - quite a considerable fortune according to Toda standards. But [429] because he was a minor, his father's brothers' sons - his first cousins on his father's side - took the property into their custody until he should come of age. Being, however, most unscrupulous, and believing that Kanvarsathi would never find out, these cousins gradually disposed of the estate to their own advantage, so that when the time came for them to hand it over, all that he got were six buffaloes and two pairs of ear-rings.

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691 When he was ten years old, he found out the real state of affairs and how he was being done out of his legitimate inheritance. He appealed against this to the Toda Government Agent, the Monegar, and to the most influential Toda of his day, the famous Kuriolv (52, properly speaking, Kiusharf in Toda, the other name being Badaga), but to no avail. These important people could not be bothered with the complaints of so small a boy, and all he got for his trouble was to be made to look after their buffaloes. This unfairness deeply wounded him, and

continued to smoulder in his heart until, in 1917, he decided to take the matter to Court, as a result of which he did receive the remaining property. 115
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Before this episode, however, his half-sister had died leaving him all alone. It was then that Miss C. F. Ling of the Church of England Zenana Mission took an interest in him and removed him to the school which she ran close to his native village at the 8th mile of the Ootacamund-Gudalur road. As a consequence of this, he was eventually converted to Christianity. After he had received the meagre remnants of his father's estate, Miss Ling sent him away to another school at Palakkottah in the Tinnevely district for further studies, and he passed there through the third form. In 1923 she sent him to Assam, to the Welsh Mission, with the idea that he should learn to be a motor mechanic, I do not quite know to which part of that large and distant province he went, as he was rather vague in his description of it, but he did say that it was wild and underdeveloped in the extreme, with no roads at all, let alone motor traffic. So, instead of being trained as a mechanic, he was made to look after the station missionary's horse as a groom, which enraged him since he had just come into what little there was left of his property and had been persuaded to leave the Nilgiris under what were apparently false pretences. [797]

After only a very few months of this most unsatisfactory situation, he ran away and managed somehow to reach Calcutta in search of work. But because of the language, Bengali, which he did not speak, he found this extremely difficult to obtain, and had to content himself with a hand to mouth existence. In the end, he got a job as a junior gardener with a kind missionary, the Rev. H. Kehel. He remained a year with the latter, and when he had saved enough money to pay for the railway fare, he took the train and returned to Madras. In that city he joined the large motor transport company, Addison and Co., where after twelve months' apprenticeship, he eventually got his driver's licence and became one of the firm's mechanics, keeping his position until 1928.

At this time his health deteriorated. He underwent a serious operation for a gastric ulcer and had to give up his work. He returned to the Nilgiris the following year, and began to take a lively interest in the well-being and progress of the community from which he sprang, the Todas. He joined the Collector of the Nilgiris' Toda Amelioration Scheme and was trained as an agriculturalist. He thus became an agricultural consultant for the tribe, advising it on such matters, and using his newly acquired knowledge as a means of livelihood. [792]